

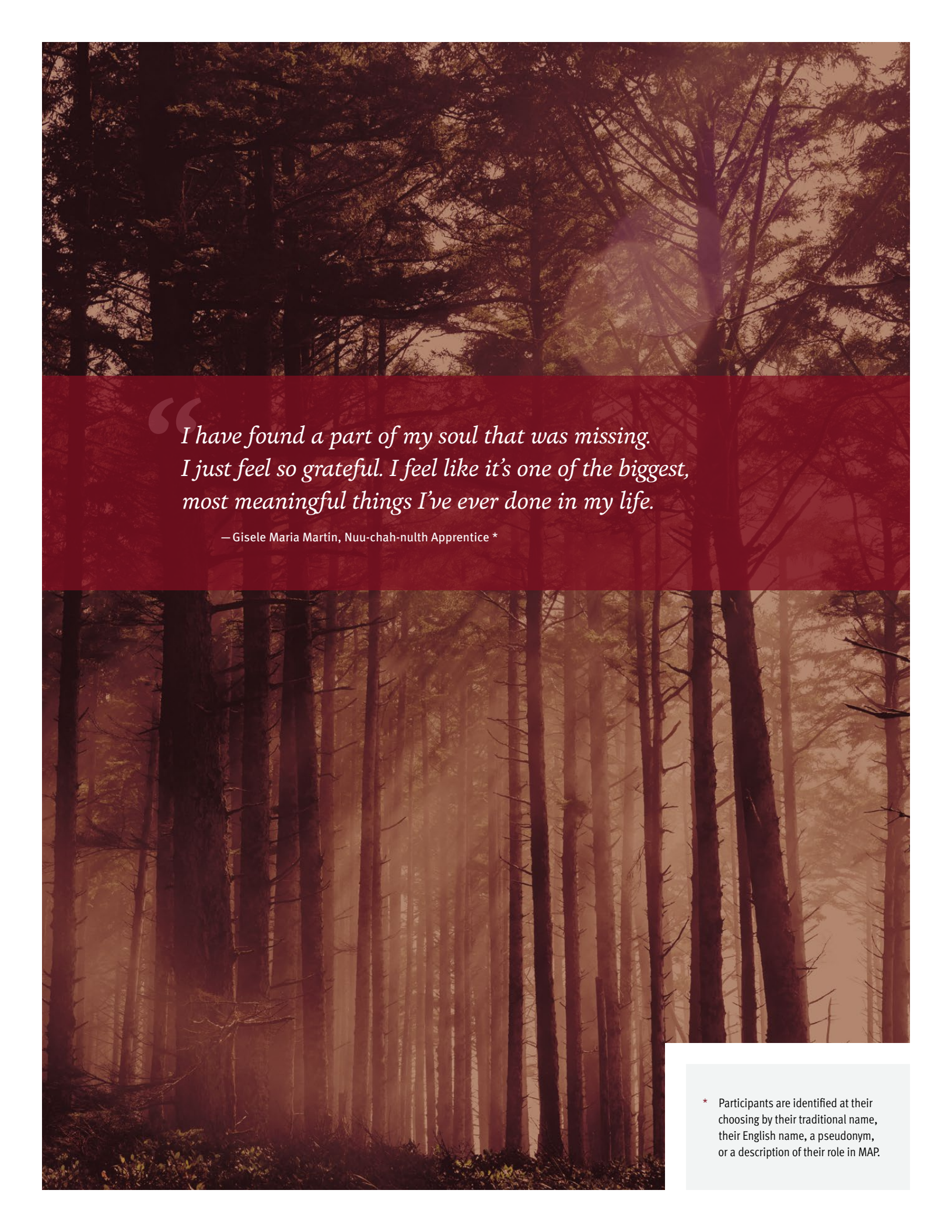
ONE mind • ONE people

NETOLNEW

*Adult Indigenous contributions to reviving languages in
British Columbia through Mentor-Apprentice style learning*

RESEARCH REPORT





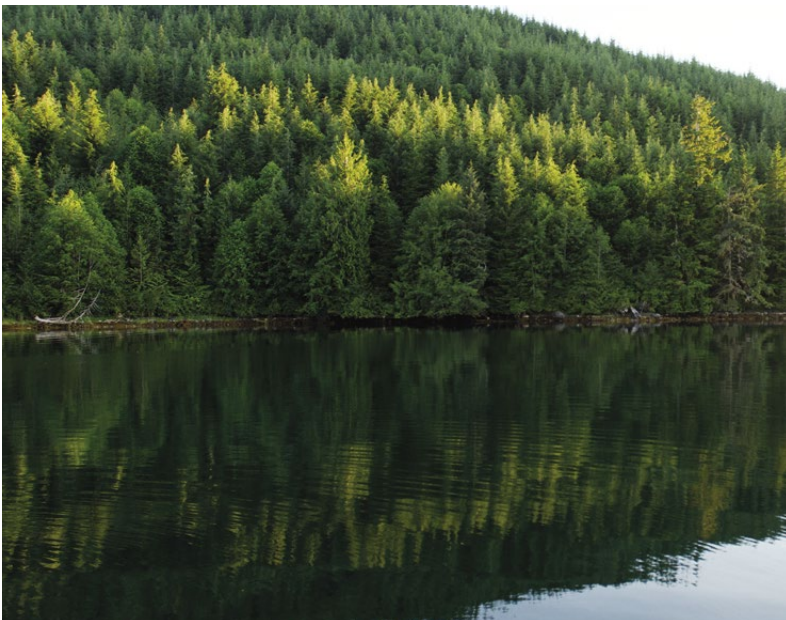
*“I have found a part of my soul that was missing.
I just feel so grateful. I feel like it’s one of the biggest,
most meaningful things I’ve ever done in my life.*

— Gisele Maria Martin, Nuuchah-nulth Apprentice *

* Participants are identified at their choosing by their traditional name, their English name, a pseudonym, or a description of their role in MAP.

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A community-university research partnership

NETOLNEW means “one mind, one people” or “doing things as one” in the SENĆOŦEN language spoken on southern Vancouver Island.

This was the name given to our research partnership between WSÁNEĆ School Board / Saanich Adult Education Centre (WSB), First Peoples’ Cultural Council (FPCC) and the University of Victoria (UVIC). The two community partners are leaders with considerable expertise and experience in Indigenous language revitalization, and, in particular, with adult language learning through Mentor-Apprentice style programming (MAP).

“

In this last decade since the evolution of our STÁSEN [MAP] program and all of the language learning that's taken place there, I think we're in a very hopeful position and a large part of that too is the fact that we have an immersion stream [...] Where any given year there are 60+ young children that are enrolled in [it]. I think it's just outstanding.

— Kendra Underwood, Director, Saanich Adult Education Centre, WSB

The Mentor-Apprentice Program is really helping to fix those broken links and renew that cycle of language transmission where apprentices who are parents are able to start speaking the language to their children, even as they are receiving it from the Elders.

— Aliana Parker, Language Revitalization Program Specialist, FPCC

WSÁNEĆ School Board / Saanich Adult Education Centre (WSB)

One goal of WSB is, simply stated, to keep their SENĆOŦEN language alive. Administrators at WSB believe that language revitalization is at the forefront of adult education and an important part of their mandate.



SENĆOŦEN language and culture is incorporated into all of the programming that is offered. Today, WSB has a language nest and K–4 immersion classes in SENĆOŦEN. Their teachers started as apprentices and are now mentoring the new generation of language teachers. Staff at WSB are assisting WSÁNEĆ community members to bring the language into their homes and share it with their families. When the children go to immersion school, their parents can become motivated to learn the language as well. Together, they are creating a community of speakers of SENĆOŦEN that has not existed here for decades.

First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC)

FPCC supports First Nations communities across BC to revitalize and maintain their languages and cultures through a number of programs. The Mentor-Apprentice Program (MAP) was one of four programs implemented in 2008 with the intention of creating new speakers. FPCC developed MAP in consultation with the communities and experts, and the program remains a true team effort to this day. It is raising interest and commitment all over BC, and the model is being adopted by many who are not in the FPCC program. MAP has helped apprentices reconnect to their culture, history, homeland, and to their Elders. It has helped mentors recognize their language and teaching skills and encouraged them to teach it to their families. Mentors and apprentices are now teaching the language in their home, in the schools, in language nests, and in the community. MAP is helping to renew the cycle of language transmission from Elders to parents and onto their children.



Introduction

INCREASINGLY, ADULT INDIGENOUS language learners are identified as the “missing generation” of language learners who hold great potential to contribute to the revival of Indigenous languages by acting as the middle ground between Elders, children, and youth within their communities.

The research project **NETOLNEW** “one mind, one people” investigated adult Indigenous language learning in British Columbia through the popular Mentor-Apprentice Program method.* Through this approach, language learners (known as *apprentices*) and proficient speakers (known as *mentors*) create their own oral language-immersive context through daily activities, cultural practices, and community involvement. The method suggests a minimum of 10 hours per week of one-on-one language immersion over a two to three year period. The number of years that mentor-apprentice pairs can be formally supported is subject to available funding.

* Originally named “Master-Apprentice Program” (Hinton, 2001); we use the word *Mentor* instead of *Master*, as preferred by our research partners.

Adapting the **MAP** method (Mentor-Apprentice Program)

BOTH PARTNERS BROUGHT their own approach to the Mentor-Apprentice model studied in this project. Faced with a declining number of mentors, **WSB** adapted the Mentor-Apprentice program from a one-on-one model to each mentor working with a pod of apprentices. During the time of this study, **WSB** did not offer a formal Mentor-Apprentice program (however, the method had been used for five years previously; see page 23).

Instead, a small group of new learners had the opportunity to work in immersive language positions and apprentice alongside advanced and proficient speakers on a daily basis in a school setting. These learners are referred to as the **SENĆOŦEN** apprentices where it is important to differentiate that results are specific to **WSB** participants.

FPCC is a provincial organization which focuses part of its programming on Indigenous language revitalization, including Mentor-Apprentice programming. **FPCC** provides training and support to a number of mentor-apprentice pairings across the province with annual training, funding, and monthly coaching support. We refer to **FPCC** apprentices where it is important to differentiate that results are specific to apprentices in the **FPCC** program.

We use the acronym **MAP** throughout this report to refer to all forms of the **Mentor-Apprentice Program** methods included in our study.

“

Mentor-Apprentice has made a huge difference in my life. In my ability to even start moving towards being a speaker... It really did allow Kwak'wala to be my life journey... It made my dream, to participate as a speaker, a possibility.

— Trish Rosborough, Kwak'wala Apprentice

*I think what we're trying to do is create a language community. A community of speakers that we can create space to just use **SENĆOŦEN** that hasn't existed here [for] decades.*

— Tye Swallow, Saanich Adult Education Centre instructor, **WSB**

Languages represented
in the project

Ditidaht
Gitsenim̓x
Hul̓qumín̓um̓
Ktunaxa
Kwak'wala
Nsyilxcən
Nuu-chah-nulth
Nuxalk

Secwepemctsín
SENĆOTEN
She shashishalhem
St'át'imcets
Tsilhqot'in
Witsuwit'en
'Uikala
Xaad kíł

“

You need to plan, you need to create speakers, you need to work together, and you need to work with programs that get us all towards that goal of creating speakers. So it was a really big move [in] BC. To change the program to something really focused and substantial.

— Deanna Daniels, former Language Coordinator, FPCC

“

I think [MAP] is a good way for somebody to become fluent [in] the quickest way, for a person to gain fluency.

— Bucky Ned, St'át'imcets Mentor

The research process

THREE PARTNERS – FPCC, WSB, and UVIC – secured support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) for this three-year project.

Research participants were recruited both from the WSÁNEĆ community and from two FPCC MAP cohorts. Both partner organizations identified potential participants, who were then contacted for their interest.

We spoke with current and past *apprentices*, current and past language *mentors*, and *administrators* in both partner organizations.

Current apprentices were interviewed up to six times over one to two years, to document their learning process. *Past* apprentices that had participated in MAP prior to this study, as well as all of the mentors and the administrators, were interviewed just once.

We co-developed an interview guide with our partners. The interviews included both closed and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions included information about language learning goals, activities, schedule, and their self-perceived progress. Open-ended questions included self-reporting of successes, challenges, and the effects language learning was having on other areas of their lives.

Suzanne Gessner, a program facilitator who worked with the FPCC apprentices and mentors, interviewed those participants. WSB participants were interviewed by one of two research assistants, Kevin Paul, member of the WSÁNEĆ community, or Adar Anisman, a UVIC linguistics graduate student.

Representatives from both research partner organizations, FPCC and WSB, contributed to the meaning-making process alongside the UVIC-based team.

Recruitment & data collection

	Number of potential participants identified	Recruited for individual interviews	Participated in study	Number of completed interviews
WSÁNEĆ				
Apprentices	11	10	10	28
Mentors	6	3	3	3
Administrators	2	2	2	2
Total Participants	19	15	15	33
FPCC				
Apprentices	42	25	23	83
Mentors	34	20	20	19
Administrators	4	3	3	3
Total Participants	80	48	46	105
TOTAL PROJECT				
Total Participants	99	63	61	138

Research team (L to R): Tina Matthew (RA), Barbara Jenni (Project Coordinator); Kevin Paul, (WSÁNEĆ Community RA, sitting); Onowa McIvor and Peter Jacobs (Project Co-Leads); Hua Lin, Leslie Saxon, Li-Shih Huang, and Trish Rosborough (Collaborators).





Apprentices

“

It honestly brings a huge sense of pride. And the accomplishments that I have overcome helps me be an inspiration to anyone else that's going to be wanting to learn the language. And for me it's done nothing but light the fire underneath my feet, that I'm going to be the person to bring back the language to my people... I was picked into this program for a reason. And I'm going to be the guy, I'm the person who was picked from my ancestors, that was handed down to me to bring the language back to my people.

— Adam Manson, Hul'qumíñum Apprentice

Motivation

BOTH CURRENT AND past apprentices decided to join MAP to learn their language for the following reasons:

- › They felt a sense of urgency or *duty to carry on the language*;
- › They felt that MAP specifically was *the right program for them to learn the language*, continue to progress from their learning-to-date, or to focus on speaking the language; and
- › For *personal reasons*, such as the timing was right when the opportunity came up, the program was recommended to them, they were seeking a new direction in their lives, or because of the connection to their surroundings, family, or community.

Various levels of proficiency

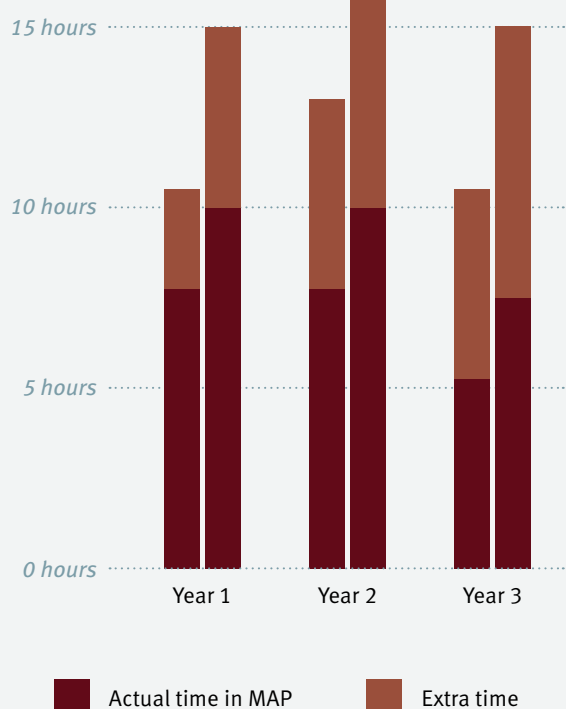
THE MENTOR-APPRENTICE APPROACH seems to be suitable for learners at all levels. Apprentices at all levels of proficiency participated in the study: from absolute beginners, with no previous language learning experience, to low-intermediate learners who previously completed one or two years of MAP.

Goal setting

THE MAP APPROACH is learner-driven, meaning the apprentice assumes the responsibility of setting learning goals. We found that apprentices who set regular and specific goals were more likely to progress in their learning, including completing the targeted numbers of hours spent in the language each week. Apprentices set goals to:

- › improve their language proficiency,
- › work on their grammar,
- › acquire language related to cultural knowledge,
- › gain skills to conduct cultural and community activities in the language, and,
- › more broadly, progress in their learning process.

Total weekly time spent in language activities



Time commitment

WE CALCULATED how much time apprentices spent learning the language, distinguishing between:

- *Actual Time* in MAP, meaning time *with* their mentor, and
- *Extra time* on their own or in community *without* their mentor.

Overall, the total time apprentices dedicated to learning their language ranged from “no or sporadic” hours, when sessions were missed due to a variety of reasons, to well over 20 hours/week. On average, apprentices spent 10–15 hours per week in language activities, as recommended in the original MAP design:

- › *In Year 1*, apprentices spent between 7.75–10 hours per week in MAP, plus committed another 2.75–5 hours per week of extra time to their language learning.
- › *In Year 2*, the time spent in MAP remained the same, while apprentices increased the amount of extra time spent learning outside of MAP to 5.25–7.5 hours per week.
- › *In Year 3*, apprentices spent less time in MAP than in previous years (on average 5.25–7.5 hours per week), yet maintained the level of extra time they committed to their ongoing language learning from Year 2. This indicates that as apprentices reached Year 3, they expanded their language learning, use, and skills by speaking with other speakers beyond (just) their mentors, and/or had reached a level of proficiency that allowed them to more comfortably learn (and converse with others) on their own.

Based on these outcomes and other scholarly findings, we conclude it takes approximately 1,000 hours of dedicated learning time to reach an intermediate level of proficiency.*

* See Johnson (2014) and McIvor (2015) for further discussion on this topic, listed in the Reference section.

Activities

The goal of MAP is to create new speakers, and more specifically, to bring their new language use into their daily lives.

This is achieved through the wide range of language-learning activities that apprentices initiate in their language learning sessions, which later expanded to other areas of their life.

Most apprentices who participated in this study conducted language learning activities with their mentors at home, in the community, and out on the land and water. For the current SENĆOŦEN apprentices, their time with mentors took place in a communal setting of immersive language positions at school.

Outside of MAP, many apprentices sought out other speakers (and other learners) to continue to engage in daily-life language-related activities, or listened to recordings or watched videos on their own.

“

I truly believe that all of our deep, deep cultural meaning and knowing how to be in the world is embedded in our language, and the more that I learn, the more that I understand that. And the more that I learn, the more that I realize that there's so much of our culture and our way of being in the world that is lost when we don't know our language.

— Molly Wickham, Witsuwit'en Apprentice

Activities conducted with mentor, during MAP



Everyday activities: doing dishes, cleaning, running errands, eating and drinking, cutting firewood



Activities on the land: fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, canoeing, berry-picking



Conversation-oriented activities: phone conversations, using pictures and puppets, narrating (wordless and other) picture books



Activities aimed at learning specific areas of the language: phrasebooks, pronunciation guides, translating children rhymes or songs, memorizing activities



Cultural activities: telling stories, prayers, learning family history, drum making, practicing public speaking



Activities with other speakers: visiting, watching videos, attending community events

Activities conducted independently, outside of MAP



Audio resources: listening to recordings of MAP sessions or other archival materials



Self-study: review, practice, self-talk including describing everything around them, labelling items in the home, grocery lists, journaling



Social activities: speaking with community members and family members, visiting, teaching, using language apps, Facebook and texting (in the language), attending and speaking at community gatherings, feasts, or funerals



Studying: participating in language groups, networking with other language learners, creating interpretive signs and panels, researching traditional knowledge



Songs: listening to and singing children's rhymes and holiday songs, translating songs and stories, composing songs

Learners becoming speakers

Of all the current apprentices, nearly 90% reported an improvement in their speaking abilities and almost all reported an increased confidence in speaking during their time in MAP.

“just... finally... speaking something outside of rehearsed sentences or... one word”

— Steven Feschuk, She shashishalhem Apprentice

“learning to... pronounce the words properly”

— Alexandria Peters, Secwepemctsin Apprentice

“speaking in much more full sentences”

— Apprentice*

“being able to get the major points of the story across”

— Gisele Maria Martin, Nuuchah-nulth Apprentice

“having a conversation with a fluent speaker”

— Tsawaluulh, Nuxalk Apprentice

“speak[ing] in front of a large crowd”

— Robert Louie, SENĆOŦEN Apprentice

“being able to direct children”

— Dominique James, SENĆOŦEN Apprentice

* Where a participant is identified by generic role description or pseudonym, their language has been omitted to respect their wish to remain anonymous.

THESE FINDINGS SUPPORT the specific aim of the MAP approach to create language speakers.

Almost half of the current apprentices also reported an increase in their vocabulary, progress in their ability to understand when spoken to by their mentor or other speakers, as well as improvements in their understanding of various language-specific grammatical concepts.

Each time we spoke with current apprentices during the study, we asked them how long they were able to “stay in the language” (without breaking into English). Those who were interviewed more than once all reported either maintaining a steady amount or a consistent increase of time in language. *Across the duration of the study, participants reported increases ranging up to three times the initial time in language. The range across participants of maintaining time in the language was from five minutes to five to six hours per event.*

With regards to past apprentices, all five of the SENĆOŦEN “past apprentices” reported having progressed to becoming intermediate to advanced speakers of the language and are now mentoring current apprentices.

Finally, by reflecting on their successes, many of the current apprentices also reported gaining insights about their actual language abilities and learning progress.

Challenges

LEARNING A LANGUAGE is not a simple task, even more so when the learner does not have easy access to proficient speakers, learning resources, or educational opportunities in the language. Many apprentices, for example, struggled with feelings of isolation as they worked on language learning in the context of lack of domains for use of their languages.

While not all apprentices faced all the challenges we described here, the following list demonstrates the deep commitment apprentices have to persevere in their language-learning journey despite, at times, difficult circumstances.

Challenges rooted in individual beliefs & expectations

- › Beginner apprentices had to adjust their expectations and come to terms with their (initial) lack of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge. During this time, but also later on, a main challenge was to remain in the language and not switch to using English to communicate. Some apprentices struggled with unrealistic or vague goals for the program, such as “becoming fluent in the language.”
- › For a few apprentices, lack of technical skills around recordings or accessing electronic resources posed difficulties in their learning, specifically outside of MAP when they relied more on resources other than their mentor.
- › All apprentices mentioned dealing with competing priorities and responsibilities, as they juggled family, work, and school obligations in addition to their MAP commitments. However, most were resourceful in maintaining their hours.
- › For a small number of apprentices who repeatedly spoke about “scheduling” as a major challenge often demonstrated other underlying challenges that seemed to be the primary issue and ultimately these apprentices did not complete the program.
- › Some apprentices also reported feeling discouraged because of the language situation in their community. They were disappointed by the lack

of language activism, or by perceived or actual judgement from others in their community. One participant shared feelings of being overwhelmed by the sense of urgency to “save the language”.

Challenges in Mentor-Apprentice relationship

- › The traditional MAP format where one mentor is paired with one apprentice is centered on a positive and functioning relationship between the apprentice and mentor. It is therefore noteworthy that almost two-thirds of current apprentices commented at one point or another on experiencing challenges in their relationships with their mentor. Some apprentices struggled in communicating with their mentor, and to deal with instances where their mentor appeared to lack knowledge in certain aspects of the language.
- › Some apprentices expressed uncertainty around proper conduct in certain situations due to a lack of cultural knowledge. These apprentices also reported that acquiring skills in this area helped them in other situations later on. Related to this, cultural taboos around making mistakes and practicing something in public before achieving mastery of it, as well as mentor’s reactions to making mistakes, created challenging situations for some apprentices. This eased where the apprentice and mentor had a strong, supportive, and established bond.
- › Similar to apprentices’ own expectations, the mentor-apprentice pair at times also needed to recalibrate their expectations around the learning process and accept that progress may be slower than expected. The better the pair was able to adjust their expectations, the stronger their relationship appeared to be or become.
- › Finally, some apprentices found it difficult to respond when their mentor appeared to struggle with their own experiences of colonization and the effects thereof (such as residential school memories), that resurfaced due to (a renewed) engagement with the language.



FIVE PARTICIPANTS LEFT the program during the duration of the study. While the circumstances for each of these participants differed, we found that all of them faced a variety of the challenges (reported on the previous page). In particular, these apprentices faced challenges in: dedicating time to the program; their relationships with their mentors; their ability to set realistic goals based on principles of language learning; and the lack of support systems in their community for language work.

An analysis of the hours spent learning the language also indicates that those who dedicated more than 10 hours/week were more likely to complete the program, whereas those dedicating no more than 7.5 hours/week were less likely to complete.

This finding teaches us that a “good fit” for apprentices needs to include the ability to prioritize MAP above other time commitments; have a good working relationship with their mentor; and receive support in setting clear, achievable goals. The experience these participants shared demonstrates that MAP may not be the right language learning approach for every person at every time in their life.



Mentors

*MAP led us
back to our Elders.*

— STIWET Elliott,
SENĆOTEN Former Apprentice
& Current Mentor

Passing on the language

THE MAJORITY OF the mentors became involved in MAP by invitation, often by their future apprentice. Almost all hoped they could pass on the language to at least one person and more specifically, that their apprentice could become a speaker.

Almost all mentors described their experience with MAP as mainly positive and stated they felt the immersive context worked well for teaching and learning the language. They felt MAP created a spark or interest in learners and others, which could carry the language work forward.

MAP also provided them with a specific approach on how to “enter and do” language work, and specifically the FPCC mentors appreciated the structural support available through the program.

“

I feel excited ... just knowing [my apprentice] is really working hard at learning the language. The other people that have heard, like you know, that [my apprentice] and I are doing, they're very excited, they say it makes them feel so good just to listen to us speaking.

— Levi Martin, Nuuchah-nulth Mentor

[MAP] opened all avenues for us. It gave us a lot of directions how to do this. If I wasn't [doing MAP]... I don't think I would have this one person always be with me all the time, like I'm just using my upbringing, ... how my parents gave me the language.

— Axeliwilhox, Gitsenimx Mentor

Mentoring one-on-one is, is so good ... because they get a level of confidence and they're not shy to enunciate what you're teaching them, and to listen. When the 300 hours is up, she will, what she has known, what she knows after we're done, she can pass it on. And that way it stays with her.

— Linda Redan, St'át'imcets Mentor

Challenges

MENTORS COMMENTED THAT language is linked to family and community and they expressed a deep wish that:

- › the language be spoken again by many;
- › heard by learners; and
- › be used within the home by the entire family.

In this context, some of the FPCC mentors felt the one-on-one pairing of MAP was a limitation of the approach. Over half of the mentors liked the focus on speaking and understanding, and the immersive approach of MAP. However, some found it challenging to not use writing and reading at all, especially if their apprentices were eager to learn to write.

The most frequently cited challenge though was “finding time” or “enough time” to learn or progress in the learning to the extent desired.

The second most cited challenge for mentors was how to deal with perceived differences in the language, specifically differences in pronunciation as mentors felt it was their responsibility to pass on correct pronunciation.

More time for learning is needed

OVERALL, MENTORS ENJOYED their involvement. They reported finding the experience interesting and fun; yet, they also acknowledged that “more” is needed: *more time with apprentices, more learning opportunities, that it takes patience, and can be difficult emotionally.* There was an overall sentiment of recognizing that this work was “just” the beginning of a long language learning journey, and “turning around” of the language in their community.

Most mentors spoke of having to overcome negative attitudes and judgment towards the language, either within themselves, or in others. Those feelings were directly related to experiences of colonization and residential school experiences.

Furthermore, half of the mentors felt scared or certain that their language will not survive, due to a lack of initiative, lack of support from communities and for learners, and lack of resources, including a vital speech community.

Still many of these mentors expressed hope and remain determined to continue to do what they can to keep the language alive.



“

It took me awhile to get back to speaking in a fluent sense. I knew what I was trying to say but a lot of times it would take me awhile to get it going. But now I find it very easy to come to when [my apprentice] needs to know something.

— Dorothy Shepherd, Ditidaht Mentor

[MAP] awakened a lot of stuff that I had stored in my back memories [...] It really helped me ... pull all of those memories out, and now I'll be sitting with someone, and something will come up, and [...] pretty soon we get to talking about things like that, so it has helped me a lot in uncovering all the old things that had been suppressed over the years.

— Clara Camille, Secwepemctsin Mentor



Communities

A deeper connection

FOR BOTH MENTORS and apprentices, their engagement with the language extended beyond their pairing, and their MAP participation created ripple effects in their respective communities.

The majority of mentors reported an increased or deepened connection to their community, family members, or others. Many mentors are now recognized as “language experts” or resource people in their community and are called upon more often.

For over half of the apprentices, their sense of accomplishment and success in MAP included their connection with their communities. *All apprentices in some way “[became] more confident to talk in front of [their] community” (Alexandria Peters, Secwepemctsin Apprentice) and “[became] more comfortable speaking about [their] culture” (Gisele Maria Martin, Nuu-chah-nulth Apprentice).* They shared the language with children, spouses, and other family members at home, and became role models to other learners.

As they progressed in their language learning, apprentices reported being expected to or were given the opportunities to deepen their community involvement, in the form of organizing community events and at times leading those events. Examples of increased responsibilities included speaking at ceremonies as representatives of their family or clan, leading an opening prayer for events, or engaging with Elders in the language who were not their mentor outside of MAP. About one-third of the FPCC apprentices became involved in Elder groups or leading and participating in cultural groups in their community.

*All of the SENĆOŦEN past apprentices reported becoming mentors to new language learners, a powerful outcome of the MAP program in that community.**

* The FPCC past apprentices were not asked about this specifically.

I'm getting asked more and more about the other stuff that I know, like the traditions and the culture. I was raised by old people too, so even though I never spoke the language, all my life I learned all the other stuff.

— Darlene Louie, Secwepemctsin Apprentice

The Mentor-Apprentice Program actually allowed me to get to know my mom all over again. [...] Just getting to know, like, how much my mom knows. How much knowledge that she has, locked away in her brain and just allowing me to get to know her again. I am totally in debt to that, to the MAP program, and that's why I feel so strongly about... the language learning and... getting to our roots again.

— Crystal Tom, Gitsenimx Apprentice

[MAP] affected me in a spiritual way. I'm involved in my language. I have somebody to talk to. People come in and ask us about the program, so I'm encouraged that way, and talking to colleagues of mine where I work, thinking about ways to create our own little program amongst ourselves.

— Xulsimalt, Hulqumíñum Mentor

Apprentices also reported creating greater interest in the language in their communities through “being able to speak with other people” (səniɔwlm, nsəlxcin Apprentice) in the language, and by becoming language advocates. They engaged other language learners by creating more language learning and spaces to use the language, more resources, and raised awareness about language endangerment and current revitalization efforts. Through their MAP experiences, they formed local networks within their own community, as well as across other Nations – the latter point was especially true for FPCC participants who were training alongside many other language groups.

Finally, almost half of the FPCC apprentices, and almost all of the SENĆOŦEN apprentices reported pursuing continuing education goals as a result of participating in MAP, either through formal post-secondary or post-graduate degree programs, or community-based language programs.

Challenges situated in the community

APPRENTICES ALSO DESCRIBED challenges in relation to their communities and their language-learning journey. We found that these challenges differed depending on the context of the apprentice.

At least one-third of the apprentices experienced some frustration over the lack of speakers in the community and discussed how this impacted their personal language learning progress. FPCC apprentices, who were at times the only learners in their community, particularly expressed this. In contrast, SENĆOŦEN apprentices whose MAP environment involved working with a group of proficient language teachers in a school setting, mentioned the lack of an individual mentor as a challenge.

Participants also expressed feeling discouraged by the limited domains of language use. While FPCC apprentices perceived going to work as a barrier to learning, SENĆOŦEN participants struggled with how to bring the language from the immersion school (where they worked) into the home.

Apprentices from different communities had different levels of access to additional language learning opportunities. Many apprentices voiced a need for language classes to complement their MAP hours with their mentor; availability of such classes generally depended on funding and organizational structures.

Finally, at times apprentices struggled with negative attitudes or apathy within their community to language learning in general. Some apprentices expressed they were able to affect changes in attitudes in their communities through their own learning.

Work & homelife implications

WHILE NONE OF the participants in this study mentioned financial incentives, such as the modest stipend provided to FPCC mentors and apprentices, as a motivating factor to learn the language or partake in MAP, participants often spoke of the challenges brought about by needing to work to earn a living while in MAP. This included:

- › having to schedule MAP sessions after work, when they were tired;
- › the impact that a strict evening schedule had on their ability to experience some types of language that comes with daytime activities;
- › having to cancel regular MAP sessions when they were away for work;
- › the time it took to commute to and from their work and MAP sessions;
- › lack of child care;
- › the need to balance work life, family life, other studies, exercise and recreation, with MAP participation.

Occupational outcomes

WHILE APPRENTICES REPORTED some difficulties, it is of great importance to note that *two-thirds of all current and past apprentices reported their language learning directly resulted in new or additional occupational opportunities* (see graphic below).

By the end of the study, all of the SENĆOTEN apprentices (n = 10), and almost half of the FPCC apprentices (n = 11) were hired or found paid work in language-related occupations in a school setting, either as teachers, teacher assistants, or contributing to language-related activities in the school, such as curriculum development.*

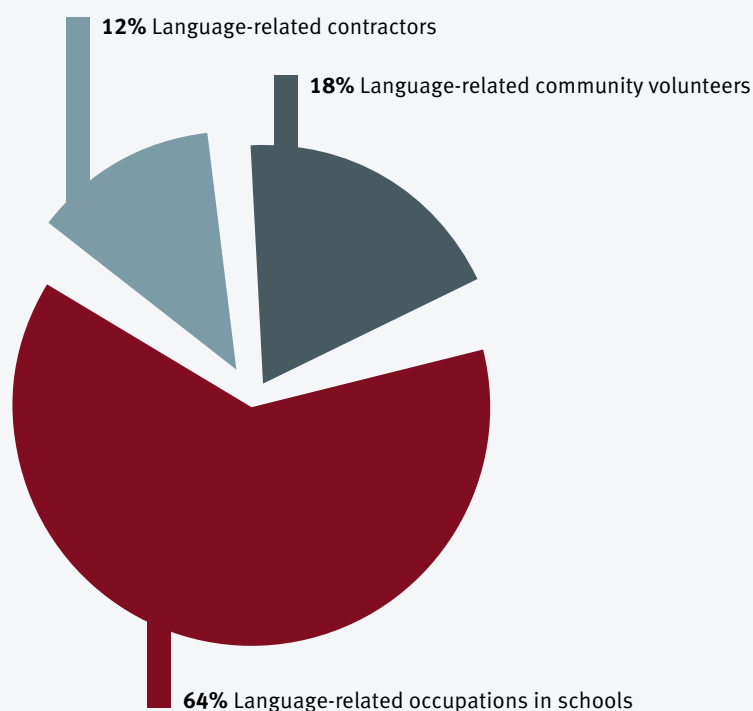
Other apprentices were able to secure language-related contract work, or contributed to their communities through volunteering in language-related settings and roles.

* One of the goals of the WSB Program is training people for future teaching positions, whereas the FPCC program is offered independently of other language programming in the community and without the specific purpose of job training.

I feel like I can teach now. Like when I first started I thought, well I should be able to teach, but now I actually offered to be with a teacher ... I'm always willing to do it. And before I wouldn't have.

— Marilyn Napoleon, St'át'imcets Apprentice

Occupational outcomes for all apprentices from both partners (N = 33)



A need for long-term programming support

APPRENTICES IN THIS study demonstrated repeatedly their commitment to their language learning, and as such their efforts deserve recognition and support. Mentors felt strongly that annual programs with minimal hours (most programs are funded for 300 hours per year) are not enough to produce proficient speakers.

Mentors recognized one benefit of MAP over a classroom setting is the comparatively higher number of hours spent in the language doing everyday activities. Their experience however is that secure long-term language programming over several years covering progressive levels of language abilities is required to move learners past the beginners' level.



“

That's the thing that frustrates me too. Because we're having these people getting funding to teach beginners' classes every, every year, you know. And it's not producing [proficient speakers].

So with this [MAP] program here, we are kind of making steps where we go from step 1, from step 2, to step 3 where, we can see our apprentices advancing [in their learning of the language]. [...] We need to be sitting in the same room, you know. Not at the university, not here, not up there. We need to be in the same room. And understand why things are failing. Because they are failing. We're not producing fluent speakers. You'll have a teacher saying "Oh, we've had Hulqumínum language in our nursery school, oh listen to Johnny, he can say [something in] Hulqumínum." You see Johnny ten years from now, he doesn't know a thing about his language. That's where we're failing. We are failing. Nobody likes to hear that. But we're not producing fluent speakers.

— Xulsimalt, Hulqumínum Mentor

There was a potlatch ban up here, there was a lot of things taken from our people and I'm a second generation from a Residential School. ... A lot of them fear speaking and for teaching with enthusiasm and yeah, just enthusiasm it has really, really helped them. So if I have a class a lot of these people are coming and we just have fun and it's making them have fun again while learning. I just feel it's really, really important because whatever those people tried to do to us it didn't really kill the language and it didn't kill anything. I just have to say that I'm just really proud to be teaching and carrying on what my granny taught me.

— Apprentice



Beyond Language Use

Identity & cultural continuity

WHEN DISCUSSING THEIR MAP experiences, about 40% of all apprentices spoke directly about how their sense of identity as an Indigenous person was positively affected by the process of learning their language and mentioned feeling proud and empowered.

In addition to directly talking about their own identity, participants also connected their language learning to cultural continuity. Notably, apprentices felt strongly that knowing oneself as a First Nations person requires knowing not only one's language, but also one's culture. Participants' feelings of responsibility towards their community and families and deepening connections to the cultural knowledge embedded in the language increased over time, from 40% of the apprentices referencing this theme at the beginning of the study to 60% of the apprentices towards the end of the study.

Feelings of loss expressed during the current apprentices' first interview appeared to transform into positive feelings of cultural continuity by their final interview, with an emphasis on hope, pride, and empowerment.

Finally, the interview responses also suggest that active participation in MAP can put feelings of urgency and loss at bay; however, when apprentices complete MAP, or are no longer involved in regular sessions with their Elders or related language activities, these feelings can re-emerge.

“

It means a lot to me. To hear... to be able to listen to some of the older stories and understand and, you know, being able to bring those stories back to life as well when I'm meeting with the children, and sharing with them, and just keeping the language alive, it means lots to me.

— Apprentice

There are things that simply can't be translated that are best just left in my language. And it [is] a part of who I am and I admit it's a part of me I wouldn't have known without it.

— Ben Louis, Nsyilxcən Apprentice

MAP & Wellbeing

WHILE INTERVIEWING PARTICIPANTS, we asked them whether their involvement with MAP had affected other areas of their lives. To our surprise, many of them spoke specifically about the effects on their health and wellbeing. The following results were developed into a full length article accessible through the *International Journal of Indigenous Health* (see Jenni, Anisman, McIvor & Jacobs, 2017, in References section for link).

Cultural & Spiritual Health & Healing

I am keeping something very precious alive by speaking my language.

— Jaskwaan Amanda Bedard,
Xaad Kíl Apprentice

Participants shared that reconnecting with their language “means everything to [them].” Many viewed the contributions of the language and language learning as an equal need to any other kind of sustenance. Apprentices reported their involvement in MAP has strengthened their identity, given them a sense of connection, and taught them how to conduct themselves better in life and in relation to others.



Health outcomes

Part of my wellness is learning my language.

— Marilyn Baptiste,
Tsilhqot'in, Apprentice

Both apprentices and mentors shared that participating in MAP acted as a motivator to maintain general wellbeing. “*When I take care of my health I’m a lot better at learning*” (Gisele Maria Martin, Nu-u-chah-nulth Apprentice). They also valued the impact learning their language had on them, “*It was... the language that... pushed me to sobriety... it gave me... a sense of who I was*” (səniʔwlm, Nsyilxcən Apprentice).

Language also provided some apprentices with a tool to connect with their emotions and process challenging times in their lives. “*And it all has meaning to it too – it teaches you a lot of calming yourself down and behaviours and actions*” (Helena Norris, SENĆOŦEN, Apprentice). Participating in MAP supported at least three apprentices in their journey to recover from addictions or to break dependency patterns in their family. These apprentices said the decision and opportunity to learn the language, alongside the relationship they formed with their mentor, was an influencing factor in their sobriety.

Language loss negatively impacts the wellbeing of Indigenous people

pišmapt, doesn’t just mean a bad, misbehaving child, it also means a poor child that has been uprooted... and is disconnected from their culture.

— Gisele Maria Martin,
Nuu-chah-nulth Apprentice

The impact of the residential school experiences and effects of colonization were discussed by participants throughout the interviews. Feelings of grief over the loss of the language were expressed especially by Elder mentors. The trauma caused by colonial policies and practices continues to affect individuals, families, and communities in complex ways, and participants talked about feelings of shame, embarrassment, and a sense of displacement, indicating that today’s language learners and teachers still wrestle with grief. As expressed by one apprentice, “*I’ve been away from home for so long*” (Crystal Tom, Gitxsan Apprentice).

The relationship between the commitment of MAP & wellbeing among participants

There’s so much to be done. [...] That’s the exhausting part of it. It’s trying to learn and teach at the same time.

— Ben Louis,
Nsyilxcən Apprentice

Participating in MAP requires a commitment, and apprentices in particular often juggle their participation with family obligations, jobs, and other educational pursuits. Despite the challenge of adding language learning to their already busy schedule, participants consistently said that learning the language made them feel strengthened, having increased confidence, and gaining overall a sense of empowerment. In the words of one apprentice, “*One of the most positive, hugest impacts of, on my life has been learning my language*” (Gisele Maria Martin, Nu-u-chah-nulth Apprentice).

Yet, fatigue and feelings of exhaustion were also commonly experienced by apprentices and were noted as counter-productive in relation to their language learning goals. One participant shared feeling “*fatigue. As in... being burnt out.*” (Adam Manson, Hul’qumínum Apprentice). Others decided to forgo other more lucrative professional options to attend MAP and therefore also experienced, at times, financial stressors.

MAP apprentices becoming future community leaders

It brings a huge sense of pride [...] and helps me be an inspiration to anyone else.

— Adam Manson,
Hulqumínum Apprentice

Most of the interviewed apprentices became (more) deeply and actively involved in their community through or following their participation in MAP; they took on roles as teachers, speakers, leaders, and became role models for others. *“I already had it in me that I wanted to learn [the language], but ... my grandmother told me that I need to speak the language before I can work for the people”* (Cheyenne Gwa’amuuk, Gitxsan, Apprentice).

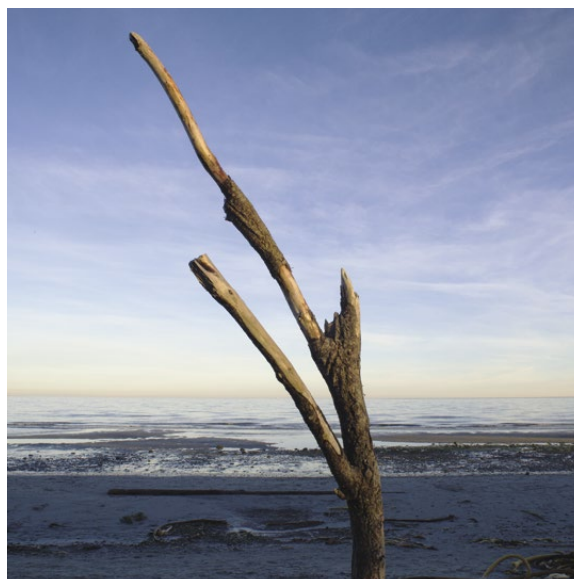
Through MAP, apprentices were fostered to feel strong and confident to take on leadership roles in their communities and *“bring [their language] back to the people”* (Adam Manson, Hulqumínum, Apprentice).

Elders’ healing through becoming language mentors

We once again have that belief in ourselves where we can feel free.

— STOLÇEE,
SENĆOTEN Mentor

Participation in MAP has provided many Elder mentors with an opportunity to become once again engaged with their language, or to deepen their engagement. Becoming a mentor created a strong feeling of hope, or in the words of one participant: *“as long as they keep remembering [the language], that’s our future”* (Ruth A. Paul).



The impact of MAP —

Case study: WSÁNEĆ

MAP WAS DESIGNED for Indigenous communities with only a small number of speakers remaining. The language learning then is a recreated immersion environment between a mentor and apprentice pair (or small learning group). Most participants in this study were a lone pair working in their particular language. However, the WSÁNEĆ cohort provided a unique opportunity to observe several apprentices studying together in the same language with the same mentors, and some apprentices went on to become mentors themselves. To appreciate the positive impacts that language learning and revitalization can have on a specific community over time, the steps taken by the WSÁNEĆ community were summarized and the outcomes of the SENĆOŦEN mentors and apprentices' investment in their language highlighted.

WSÁNEĆ School Board (WSB) adapted their Mentor-Apprentice programming from a one-on-one model to mentors working with a small pod of apprentices. In 2009, as several language teachers were approaching retirement, WSB was able to secure a grant from First Peoples' Cultural Council, as well as funding from their Board, to start the STÁSEN TFE SENĆOŦEN (Mentor-Apprentice) program. At the time, all seven apprentices who applied were offered positions, despite initially having only three spots available. This was achieved through a commitment from WSB to expand the available funding to accommodate all of those interested in learning their heritage language. This decision created immensely positive and long lasting ripple-effects.

Today, all of those “original” (past) apprentices are now mentoring the newer generation of (current) apprentices. The philosophy of mentoring language learners in “pods” is carried forward in providing this small group of new learners with the opportunity to work in immersive language positions and apprentice alongside the more advanced and proficient speakers

on a daily basis in an immersion preschool and school setting.

All ten of the SENĆOŦEN (current and past) apprentices who participated in this study shared that they were hired or found paid work in language-related occupations in a school setting, either as teachers, teacher assistants, or contributing to language-related activities such as Elder-speaker, documentation or curriculum development, etc.

Additionally, almost all of the SENĆOŦEN apprentices are pursuing continuing education goals as a result of participating in MAP, either through formal post-secondary, or community-based language programs.

Economic implications

100% of all SENĆOŦEN apprentices work in language-related occupations



Community implications

100% of all past SENĆOŦEN apprentices mentor new SENĆOŦEN apprentices



Educational implications

50% of all SENĆOŦEN apprentices pursued formal continuing education, and 30% of all SENĆOŦEN apprentices pursued community-based education





Key Findings

THE RESULTS FROM this 3-year study show that MAP as a language learning and revitalization method has had tremendous positive impacts for mentors, apprentices, and communities across BC.

- › *Apprentices acquired skills reaching far beyond reclaiming their language*; many reported becoming more proficient in cultural practices, more deeply involved in their communities, increased feelings of wellbeing and confidence, and have accepted greater responsibilities in their communities, including passing on the language to the next generation(s).
 - › Two-thirds of all current and past apprentices secured occupational opportunities, and many apprentices also pursued higher education as a direct result of their language learning in MAP. Their *occupational and educational pursuits in turn strengthened their communities*.
 - › Mentors reported having regained hope and given *a means to find healing from the trauma of colonization*.
 - › Many mentors were also more overtly recognized as language keepers and asked to contribute their wisdom in their communities.
- But more is needed: More time, more learning opportunities, and continued patience and resilience to handle accompanying difficult emotions. There is an overall sentiment expressed by the participants in this study that the work they are doing now is “just” a beginning.
- › Mentors emphasized that to move learners past beginner levels, *language programming must be secure, long-term, and multi-year*.
 - › Participants often spoke of the *challenges of needing to earn a living while participating in MAP* (a 10–20 hour/week commitment), and of the demands of balancing work life, family life, other studies, exercise, and recreation with MAP.
 - › There are many reasons why pairings, at times, do not work out or life challenges get in the way of success in MAP. This study showed that “*putting in the hours*” leads to increased proficiency; however, *increased supports are also needed to handle the complicated factors which impact teams, apprentices, and mentors’ chances for success*.

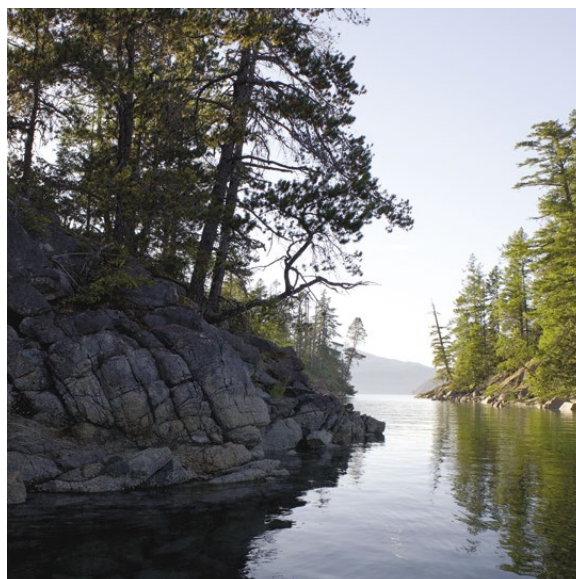
Recommendations

- › *Multi-year funding is critical.* Throughout the study and across participants, the need to expand the current 300-hour support to 1,000 hours per year for 3–5 years was resounding. In any language, 300 hours of learning over a 6-month period would provide familiarity with a language, but would not be expected to create new speakers in any other circumstance.
- › *Greater funding for organizations to support MAP.* Both FPCC and WSB provided tremendous support to both apprentices and mentors. Stable and adequate funding for these kinds of organizations and Nations is critical to the success of apprentices and mentors in MAP.
- › *Provide adequate funding to apprentices.* This would allow learners to dedicate full-time attention to language learning as occurs with other adult language learning programs in Canada. This funding would also recognize that most apprentices are also working or going to school full-time (or both), as well as raising young families.
- › *Provide greater funding to mentors.* Elder speakers often live on limited income and offer their time to these learners. A greater stipend to recognize the value of the knowledge they hold would be more honouring to our language speakers.
- › *Language learning assessment.* Regular and consistent longer term (beyond 300 hours) assessment of learner's progress would be beneficial to continuing to improve this method.
- › *Learner goal-setting.* The findings emphasize the power and positive outcomes of setting realistic and informed language learning goals for learners. It is recommended that any organization undertaking this program ensure there is strong support to teach learners about realistic outcomes and assist with goal-setting and monitoring.

Future directions

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR future research:

- A A longer study of MAP participants over a 5–10 year period, as they enter the program and staying with them after their completion to study *language learning plateaus* and *additional strategies undertaken to continue building higher levels of proficiency in language*.
- B Participants expressed concerns about *language change*, e.g. changes in pronunciation occurring with the apprentices, and the need for the creation of new words and of new forms of existing words. Therefore, we recommend:
 - › Research in tracking the pronunciation of MAP pairings to investigate the nature of this language change;
 - › The incorporation of pedagogical materials in future MAP endeavours to assist with pronunciation development; and,
 - › Providing MAP pairs (and their communities) with models of how new words can be formed.
- C Expanding the pilot *Language Learning Assessment Tool* developed during this project, to include Reading and Writing, as well as Advanced and Superior levels of proficiency.



Providing support

Tips for supporting MAP apprentices

Support apprentices throughout their language learning process

- › Offer education on the process of language learning and help with setting realistic goals.
- › Clarify the purpose and importance of setting realistic and practical goals.
- › Provide examples of useful goals.
- › Explain the concept of proficiency and what outcomes apprentices can expect depending on hours and time invested into MAP.
- › Highlight the benefits of maintaining a set schedule and discuss ways to manage competing priorities.
- › Facilitate exchanges with experienced or past apprentices during MAP training on how to conduct themselves with and learn from Elders.
- › Provide training on how to respond in situations when mentors appear to be dealing with the effects of colonization, which may surface during (renewed) engagements with the language.

Technical support

- › Provide technical support during MAP training and ongoing throughout the year(s) to equip apprentices with tools to operate language (learning) technologies (i.e. transferring MAP session recordings from phones to computers, accessing archival resources, etc.)
- › Provide access to equipment and opportunities to learn to digitise old recordings in case the apprentice's respective community has or discovers archived resources.

Support apprentice exchanges and connecting with others in language learning roles

- › Encourage apprentices to maintain a network of learners with other apprentices, in person, at relevant events, or via social media.
- › Develop support networks for apprentices through facilitation of ongoing meetings that include more experienced and past apprentices, as well as new apprentices, to pass on advice, share experiences, and discuss how to overcome challenges and barriers.
- › Encourage apprentices to pass on what they are learning to other interested members in the community to create both a sense of cohort within the community and to mitigate feelings of responsibility towards “continuing the language” for the community.

“

[MAP] just brought a connection to who I am, and, you know, I've always told a story that when I got my ancestral, my Sechelt name, my real name, it changed my life, and you know, I just can't see how moving forward and with the language isn't going to continue to do that for me and my family.

— Steven Feschuk, She shashishalhem Apprentice

Tips for supporting MAP mentors

Support mentors in their role as teachers

- › Teach basic additional language learning theory to assist mentors with understanding how becoming a new speaker in adulthood is different from learning a first language as a child.
- › Clarify how MAP works and differs from other teaching approaches to better explain the mentor's role.
- › Provide suggestions on how to respond to apprentices' request to use reading and writing or find out why mentors themselves would like use reading and writing: Explore if this is due to preferred/learned teaching style, or due to a feeling of urgency to use other resources to advance in the language.
- › Help pairs understand why it is generally better not to rely on writing (especially in early stages).
- › Support that teaching can include cultural and environmental knowledge and go beyond "just language."
- › Explain purpose of the honoraria, and how it relates to their role as a mentor to support them in reconciling potential difficult feelings around getting paid to use their own language.

Pronunciation differences and proficiency challenges

- › Facilitate an exchange between "new" and more "experienced" mentors to share experiences and how they handle pronunciation differences with their apprentice.
- › Provide support on how to access language resources, when they feel their own language proficiency is limited in certain areas or if they feel they lack specific vocabulary.

Support mentor exchanges and connecting with other language speakers

- › Provide opportunities to share with and hear from others in similar roles and positions, as they become (more) involved in their communities and receive (possibly further) recognition as language experts.
- › Offer support on how to deal with concerns about the state of the language.
- › Provide group and private opportunities to talk about frustrations experienced during MAP and how to best communicate with apprentices across generational differences.

“

Each time I'm acknowledged by [Elder speakers], it makes me have a connection, and the Elders now know who I am, and they know who my parents are, and they see that I'm doing my best to learn. So for that I feel ... our language is still there and it's still alive, and I feel empowered to think about my great-grandparents, who were so strong in the culture. [You] get a warm heart, a warm feeling in your heart because you're able to understand. Understand them, and it's empowering that... and you just feel so blessed that you can learn the language that they learned, like thousands of years ago. That was almost taken away...

— Hla Algyax, Gitsenimx Apprentice

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Web resources

First Peoples' Cultural Council
www.fpcc.ca

WSÁNEĆ School Board SENCOTEN Master Apprenticeship Program
wsanecschoolboard.ca/education/sencoten-apprentice-program

University of Victoria, Indigenous Education
www.uvic.ca/education/indigenous/

ONE mind · ONE people

NETOLNEW

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Photos

cover	bottom left, Steven and Yvonne (Sháshíshálh) top right, students of the UVIC Bachelor of Indigenous Language Revitalization program
page 1	Renee (with her children) and STOLØEŁ (WSÁNEĆ)
page 7	PENÁWEN, Renee, and Robert (WSÁNEĆ)
page 13	Alicia and Cecilia (Secwepemctsin)
page 14	Adam and Gary (Hulqumínumh)
page 15	Frances and Melanie (Kwak'wala)
page 18	Molly and Mabel (Wet'suwet'en)
page 20	Mabel and Molly (with her family) (Wet'suwet'en)
page 24	Frances and Melanie (Kwak'wala)

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“
*I can feel the difference in the community.
The spirit of the community is returning.
We are regaining hope.
It is good to be ourselves.*

— COSINIYE Elliott, SENĆOTEN Mentor



LEARN MORE AT www.netolnew.ca
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